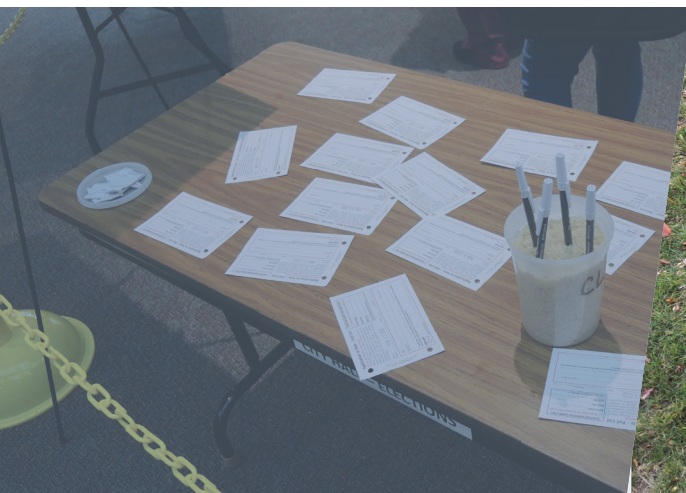


VERIFYING THE VOTE



2020 GENERAL ELECTION Procedural Audit Report



Ottawa County
Clerk | Register of Deeds

www.miOttawa.org/elections



A shared desire for integrity

In the months following the November 3, 2020 election, I have spoken personally with many residents of Ottawa County who have shared their concerns with me about the elections process and want to know that their vote counted.

I appreciate each of these conversations because I believe every one of them represents a shared desire for integrity in our elections.

If our system of government is to work properly, it must be built upon a foundation of trust in the method by which we choose our government. That trust must begin with transparency and accountability on the part of election officials.

One important way that we can remain transparent and accountable is the release of this detailed report of the findings of our post-election audit for the 2020 Presidential Election.

Our team has worked hard in the days and weeks following the Presidential Election to certify, audit and review the entire elections process.

Directly following the certification of results by the Board of County Canvassers, County Clerk's Office staff began a procedural audit of the



Ottawa County Clerk Justin Roebuck (left) talks on camera during the Procedural Audit session at Ottawa County's administration offices in West Olive, Michigan.



November election. This audit includes a number of checks on the statutory requirements that city and township clerks must follow, as well as a hand count of ballots to verify the accuracy of the equipment used in the precincts randomly selected for audit.

The report in the pages that follow shows the extraordinary level of accuracy found in Ottawa County's elections. It also details key areas of improvement that we need to highlight in order to make our system better.

Transparency is critical, but to be truly accountable, we must include an honest assessment that acknowledges mistakes, and a record of improvement in those areas so that our citizens can see the progress over time.

My sincere thanks to our County Clerk/Register team for their outstanding work in performing a thorough and transparent audit.

I am also enormously grateful for our incredible City and Township Clerks and the more than 1,000 election workers who served in the November presidential election.

Their commitment to integrity shows in this report, and in all they do for their communities.

Justin Roebuck
Ottawa County Clerk

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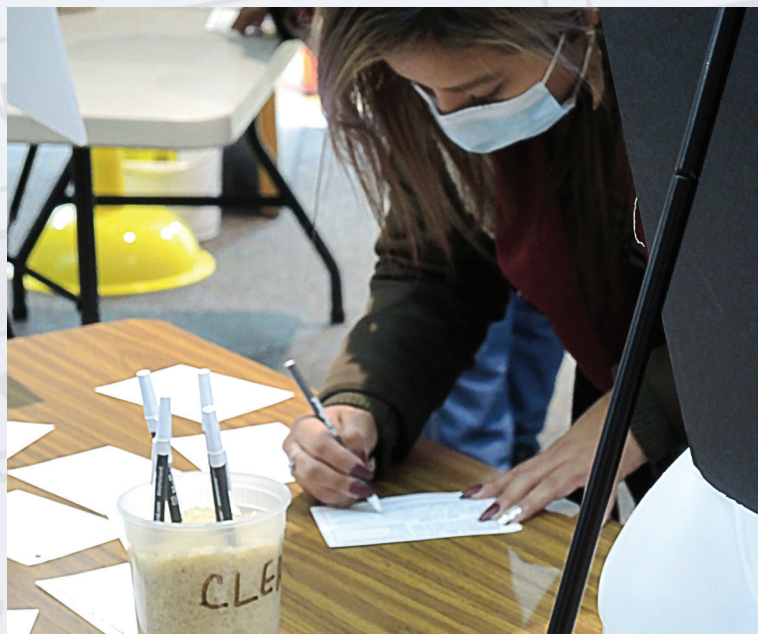
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Understanding the Procedural Audit



After each election, county clerks throughout Michigan are required to conduct a **post-election procedural audit**. The purpose of this audit is to ensure that city and township clerks and election workers followed proper procedures before, during, and after Election Day.

Each city and township is responsible for issuing ballots to voters, hiring election workers, and properly storing their materials. The county clerk's role is to verify that each of these steps were handled properly, and to report the findings of this audit to the Secretary of State.

Let's take a look at the process ...

STEP 1 Selection Process

SECRETARY OF STATE'S OFFICE SELECTS PRECINCTS

► The Secretary of State's Office is responsible for selecting precincts for the procedural audit. While each precinct is selected at random, the number of precincts to be selected is typically the same.

For example, in statewide elections, Ottawa County is responsible for auditing 10% of our in-person and absentee precincts.

STEP 2 Clerk Preparation

KEEPING OFFICIAL ELECTION RECORDS

► City and township clerks are required to maintain detailed records of each election.

► When a community is selected for an audit, the local clerk gathers their materials for the county to review.



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STEP 3 Document Review



VOTING APPLICATIONS

- ▶ Every voter must complete and sign an application to vote before they can receive an official ballot.
- ▶ As part of the audit, county clerks count the total number of applications issued in each of the selected precincts and verify that the total number of applications matches the total number of voters.



ELECTION INSPECTOR CERTIFICATION & APPROVAL

- ▶ Local clerks are responsible for hiring election workers to staff in-person and absentee precincts.
- ▶ All workers must be trained and approved to work in the election by the local election commission.
- ▶ County Clerk staff also ensures that there is at least one election worker from each major party (at least one Democrat and one Republican) per precinct.



BALLOTS

- ▶ All voters in Michigan vote on a paper ballot.
- ▶ County clerks are responsible for conducting a full hand recount of ballots from precincts that are selected for an audit to make sure the ballot tabulator counted each paper ballot accurately.

STEP 4 Conducting the Audit

AUDITING BEGINS

- ▶ After receiving all materials, county clerk employees begin the audit process by inspecting election documents and procedures used prior to the election and on Election Day. All precincts throughout Michigan use the same criteria to conduct the audit. Any discrepancies are documented.
- ▶ The Ottawa County Clerk's Office live-streamed several days of auditing and posted videos on social media for public viewing.



LOCAL CLERK DOCUMENTATION SUBMISSION

- ▶ Typically, county clerk employees travel to each local community to review their materials for the procedural audit.
- ▶ This year, the document review portion of the audit was conducted remotely, with local clerks submitting documents electronically.
- ▶ All 10 of the selected jurisdictions delivered their ballots and voter applications to the county to be audited.



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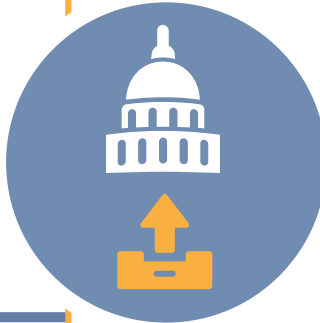
STEP 5 Final Review

DOUBLE-CHECKING AUDIT CRITERIA



► County clerk employees ensure all requirements of the audit have been completed and that any discrepancies have been explained.

AUDIT DATA ENTERED DIGITALLY, SENT TO STATE



► Once the County Clerk approves the audit, the data is submitted to the Bureau of Elections. State officials then review the audit.

STEP 6 Followup



DISCREPANCIES ADDRESSED THROUGH TRAINING

► Based on the outcome of the audit, the Secretary of State's office and County Clerks will address any issues or deficiencies through additional training.





How Did We Do?



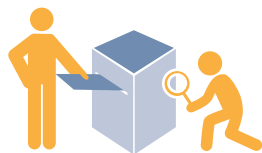
These statistics have been chosen to represent the most vital tasks related to the security and integrity of our elections process.

Each procedure is rated with a letter grade. An **'A+'** means all precincts followed procedures correctly. A **'B'** means there is room for improvement. You can read more about any deficiencies and how they will be addressed in the **'Areas for Improvement'** section on **Page 7**.



ELECTION INSPECTORS

Criteria	Procedure	Evaluation	Grade	
Major parties represented 	There must be at least one Republican and one Democratic election inspector appointed in each precinct.	County Clerk staff reviews the election inspectors' applications to ensure both major political parties are represented in the precinct.	A+	100% 19 of 19 precincts
Proof of training 	Every appointed inspector must attend a training class, and the list of certified election inspectors was sent to the local political parties.	County Clerk staff reviews training certificates for each election inspector.	A+	100% 19 of 19 precincts


PUBLIC TEST

	Were public logic and accuracy tests accurately completed in each precinct?	Records must show each machine was tested according to legal standards, and each ballot tabulator produced accurate test results.	A+	100% 19 of 19 precincts
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APPLICATIONS TO VOTE

Criteria	Procedure	Evaluation	Grade	
Number of applications 	The number of ballot applications received matches the number of voters.	County Clerk staff physically counts the applications and determine if the number of applications matches the number of voters in the poll book.	B	84% 16 of 19 precincts
Properly completed 	Applications include required information.	County Clerk staff verifies the applications to ensure they were filled out correctly by both voters and election inspectors.	B+	89.5% 17 of 19 precincts

BALLOT CONTAINER

Properly sealed? 	Were all ballot containers properly sealed following the election?	County Clerk staff ensures all ballot containers have a tamper-evident seal that is affixed securely to the container, and a certificate that is properly signed.	B+	89.5% 17 of 19 precincts
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ELECTION RESULTS

Accurate results 	A hand count of the ballots matches the ballot tabulator totals that were certified in the post-election canvass.	County Clerk staff performs a hand count of voted ballots in the offices of President and U.S. Senator. These totals are then compared to the official results.	A+	100% 19 of 19 precincts
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AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

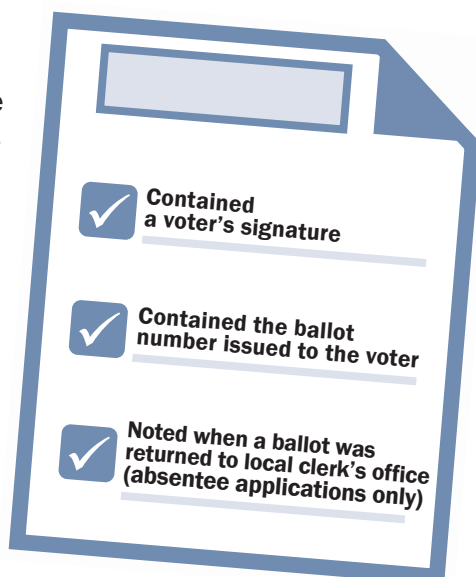
The post-election audit of the November 3, 2020 General Election reviewed 10 out of 105 precincts in Ottawa County. Among these 10 precincts, nine counted their absentee ballots in a separate Absent Voter Counting Board, for a total of 19 precincts to audit. Each of these 19 separate precincts were reviewed as part of the post-election audit.

While most precincts completed the audit successfully, the three areas that need further training and improvement include: **processing absentee ballot applications, storing absentee ballot applications, and properly sealing ballot containers.**

PROCESSING ABSENTEE BALLOT APPLICATIONS

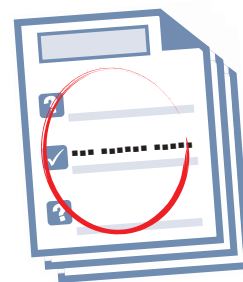
► Among the **19** precincts reviewed, **17** properly processed their absentee ballot applications.

This means that each application:



► The two precincts that did not process their applications properly were both precincts from Absentee Voter Counting Boards.

► Applications from these two precincts **all contained voter signatures**, but some applications did not contain the voter's ballot number and/or the date the voter's ballot was returned to the local clerk's office.



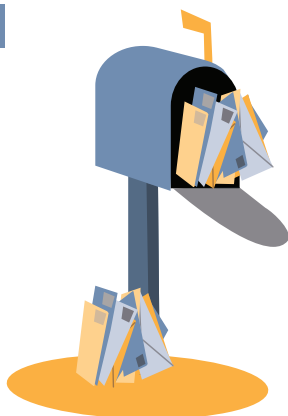
► This information, however, was stored separately by each local clerk's office in the voter registration system.

NEXT STEPS ...

TRAINING



► **Improve training** for local clerks and their staff to ensure that each application is manually updated as ballots arrive at the local clerk's office.



REDUCE DUPLICATE APPLICATIONS

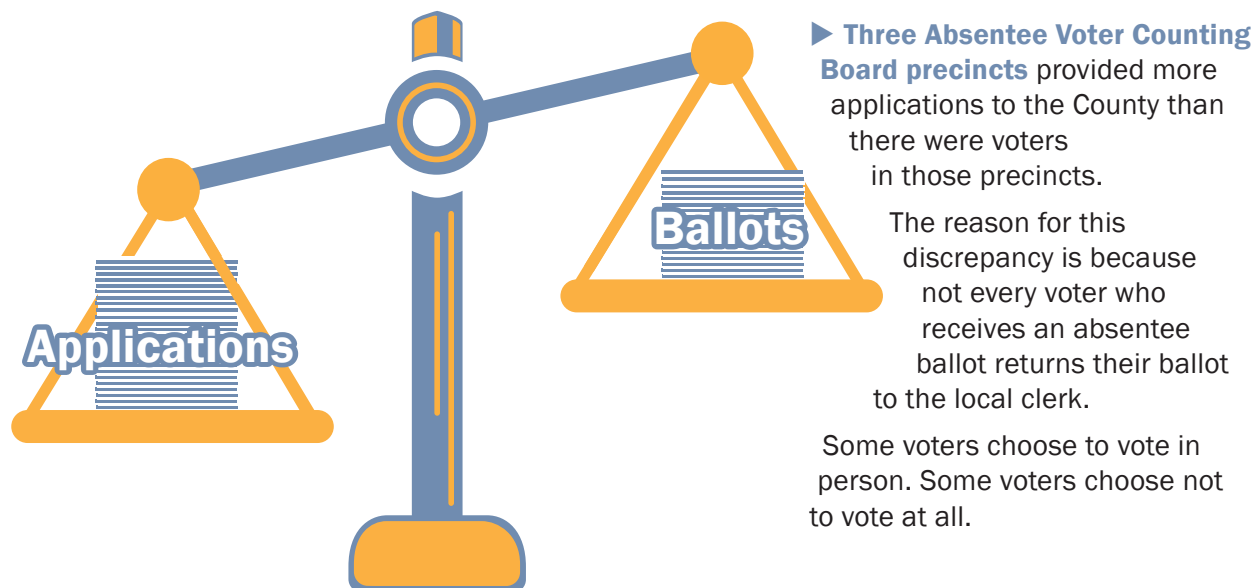
► We intend to work with the Bureau of Elections and support legislation to **reduce the number of duplicate absentee ballot applications voters receive.**

► While there is no way a voter can get more than one ballot, voters who submit duplicate applications may be confused and assume they need to submit a new application.

► Duplicate applications also slow down the process of receiving applications and issuing ballots to voters at the local clerk's office.

STORING ABSENTEE BALLOT APPLICATIONS

► Among the **19 precincts** reviewed, **16 precincts** properly stored their ballot applications. This means that the total number of ballot applications presented to the County matched the total number of ballots physically present in the ballot container.



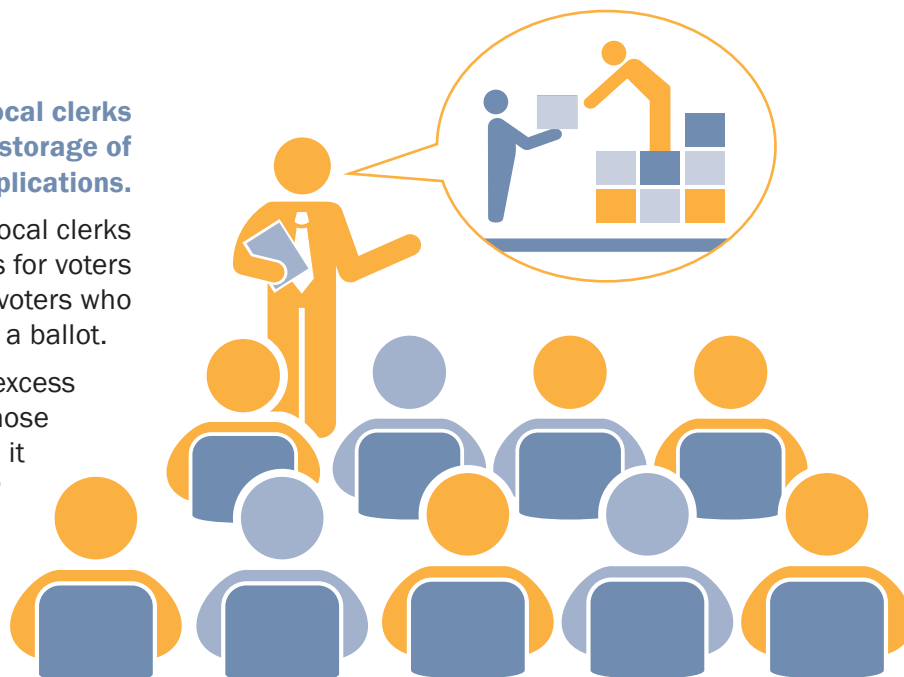
NEXT STEPS ...

IMPROVE TRAINING FOR LOCAL CLERKS

► **Improve training for local clerks regarding the proper storage of absentee ballot applications.**

Specifically, require local clerks to separate applications for voters who returned a ballot from voters who did not return a ballot.

While there were excess applications present in those precincts identified, it was clear that **no voter returned a ballot without first submitting an application.**



PROPERLY SEALING BALLOT CONTAINERS

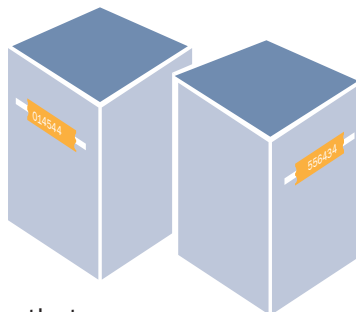
► Each precinct is required to properly seal their ballots in an approved ballot container after the polls close on Election Day. In order for a container to be properly sealed, it must:

- ✓ Be pre-approved for use in elections by the Board of County Canvassers.
- ✓ Be closed completely so that no ballots can be added to, or removed from, the container without some evidence of tampering on the seal or the container itself.
- ✓ Be sealed with an official State of Michigan seal with a unique seal number.
- ✓ Have the seal number recorded correctly in the Poll Book and on a Certificate affixed to the container itself.
- ✓ Have that seal number verified by one member of each political party.
- ✓ Have one member of each political party sign the Poll Book and the Certificate stating that they were the ones to seal the container, and that the seal number affixed to the container matches the seal number recorded in the Poll Book and on the Certificate.

► Among the **19** ballot containers reviewed, **17** were fully properly sealed.



► **Two** ballot containers did not include signatures on the Certificate that was affixed to the ballot container.



► However, the **seal number did match** the number that was recorded on the certificate and in the poll book for each precinct.

NEXT STEPS ...

UPGRADE BALLOT CONTAINERS



► We intend to work with our local clerks to **upgrade our ballot containers** throughout the county to make the process of sealing ballot containers more uniform across all 23 of our local jurisdictions.

TRAINING



► **Improve training** for Election Inspectors on properly sealing ballot containers.



SUPERSTAR CLERKS & ELECTION WORKERS

Finally, we would like to highlight one area of success that was reaffirmed by the post-election audit. **Our local clerks and election workers did a phenomenal job of conducting the November 2020 election.**

While there are occasional errors in every election, the post-election canvass confirmed that only one ballot could not be reconciled with the list of voters in a single precinct.

Out of the nearly **170,000** ballots cast in this election, this is an accuracy rate of **99.9994%**. For a process that includes **23** local jurisdictions, **dozens** of election officials, and approximately **1,000** election inspectors, this is a remarkable level of precision.

This is a testament to the dedication of every individual involved in the election process in Ottawa County. To all of our local clerks, office staff, and election inspectors – **thank you!**



DECIPHERING THE JARGON

The world of elections is full of terms and phrases that may be new or unclear. This glossary aims to help you navigate the language used in this report.

But before we list definitions, here are a few facts about how Michigan’s elections are organized and run:

► **Michigan’s elections are local.** Unlike many other states, Michigan is unique in that it administers elections at the city/township level.

► In Michigan there are **83 county clerks, 280 city clerks** and **1,240 township clerks**; this adds up to a total of **1,603** county and local election officials. Elections are held every year in May, August, and November. This requires a continual focus statewide on pre-election, election day and post-election duties and requirements.

► Audits are performed following every election by the **County Clerk’s office**. To better understand the difference between a **county clerk** and a **local clerk**, review our glossary terms below.

ABSENTEE VOTING

► Often referred to as “voting by mail” or “voting at home,” voters who receive an absentee ballot will be issued a ballot in the mail, and may return their ballots to their local clerk’s offices by mail or in person until 8 p.m. on Election Day. Voters can also request an absentee ballot in person up to 4 p.m. the day before Election Day. Since the passage of Proposal 3 in 2018, all registered Michigan voters can request an absentee ballot for any reason.

BALLOT

► Elections in Michigan are based on paper ballots. While all ballots in Michigan are counted using electronic voting systems, the ballots themselves are marked by hand.

County Clerks are responsible for conducting a full hand recount of each precinct that is selected for an audit to make sure that the ballot tabulator counted each paper ballot accurately.

BOARD OF COUNTY CANVASSERS

► Election results aren’t official until tallies from each precinct are certified by a bipartisan, independent Board of County Canvassers. This board has four members (two Democrats and two Republicans), and verifies that the number of ballots cast matches the number of voters in each precinct. This reviewing process may take up to two weeks.

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BUREAU OF ELECTIONS

► The BOE works under the direction of the Secretary of State and the Board of State Canvassers. The BOE assists local election officials with their administrative duties; conducts ongoing statewide instructional programs on elections, both in person and online; oversees the operation of Michigan’s voter registration database; publishes manuals and newsletters; accepts and reviews candidate and petition filings; conducts state-level recounts; coordinates statewide voting system certification and purchases; as well as other duties.

COUNTY CLERK

► The County Clerk’s Office is responsible for coordinating federal, state and countywide elections with local clerks offices; printing and tabulating ballots; assisting with the training of elections inspectors; and other election-related duties. The County Clerk is also responsible for ensuring local candidates are in compliance with the Michigan Campaign Finance Act. County Clerks are required to conduct a post-election procedural audit of every election.

ELECTION INSPECTOR

► “Election Inspectors” are the many individuals who are responsible for staffing voting precincts during an election. All Election Inspectors are hired by local clerks, but they receive training from both county and local clerks. Every precinct must have at least one Democratic and one Republican Election Inspector at all times.

LOCAL CLERK

► Refers to city and township clerks. All township clerks are elected, while city clerks may be elected or appointed by a city council. These clerks maintain the voter registration records for their respective jurisdictions and are responsible

for administering all federal, state, county and local elections in their communities. These local clerks have online access to Michigan’s voter registration database (Qualified Voter File), although some smaller jurisdictions rely on their county clerk for day-to-day voter registration tasks.

POLL BOOK

► Each precinct maintains a separate list of voters. When voters walk in to a precinct, or return an absentee ballot, this list is updated to show which voter cast a ballot. A poll book laptop is used in the polling place on Election Day to process voters and generate precinct reports. Poll book data is reviewed by county clerk workers during the procedural audit.

POST-ELECTION AUDIT WORKSHEET

► A document used by County Clerks to verify all procedures were followed before and during an election. All precincts that are selected for an audit across the state use the same Post-Election Audit Worksheet. Any discrepancies found are documented on this worksheet. The worksheet data is submitted to the Bureau of Elections.

PRECINCT

► A precinct is the smallest unit into which voting districts are divided. Each city, township, and village is divided into one or more voting precincts. Each precinct has a specific polling place where its residents go to vote. Election results are reported out on a precinct-by-precinct basis. There are 105 precincts in Ottawa County.

SECRETARY OF STATE

► The Secretary of State is Michigan’s “chief election officer.” The SOS is responsible for training local election officials and oversees elections statewide.



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